

EPA to explain Galena plan

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GALENA, Kan. — The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is to explain to the residents of Galena how it intends to spend \$5.8 million to address the surface and ground-water pollution problems that have been linked to the town's abandoned lead and zinc mines.

The EPA will hold a public meeting at 7 p.m. Wednesday at the Galena Senior Citizens Building, 720 Wall St.

In separate action in early November, the EPA offered to spend \$4.38 million to build a water supply system for about 1,050 rural Galena and Lowell residents whose water has been polluted by heavy metals from the lead and zinc mines. The residents get their water from shallow wells.

A local steering committee is organizing the formation of a rural water district and is attempting to raise about \$430,000 in matching funds to secure the Superfund grant from the EPA.

The proposal that will be explained Wednesday night is the plan that has been developed by the EPA and the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) to clean up the high levels of toxic cadmium, chrome, zinc and lead that have been found in Galena's ground and surface water.

Gov. Mike Hayden is seeking a \$500,000 appropriation from the Legislature in this session. The money would be used as matching funds to secure the Superfund grant from the EPA.

The Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act of 1980 requires that the affected state provide assurance for the funding of 10 percent of the cost of the remedial action.

The proposal to clean up the polluted water is the first major step toward solving some of the problems in an area once dubbed "one of the most polluted in the nation," said Gale Wright, chief of the remedial section for the EPA in Kansas City, Kan.

See Plan, 10A

Continued from Page 1A

Cherokee County, in which Galena is located, was designated as a priority area for cleanup with money from the federal Superfund program in 1983. So far, more than \$1 million has been spent to study the problems in Galena, which is one of six polluted mining sites in the county that have been singled out for cleanup.

The primary goals of the remedial plan are to protect the Roubidoux aquifer, and to improve water quality by reducing the movement of metals into surface and ground water supplies. The aquifer is the primary source for municipal water in the area.

The key elements of the cleanup plan:

—Surface mine wastes will be removed and treated, through milling and flotation, to remove the lead and zinc. This action will reduce the human exposure to the contaminants in the surface wastes and the migration of those contaminants into the ground water and streams. The metals removed from the wastes will be sold to help defray a portion of the costs. The tailings remaining

after the removal of the metals will be disposed of the mine voids.

—Surface drainage will be diverted around specific areas to prevent streams from flowing into mine shafts and subsidences. The planned diversions, among others, include re-establishing a stream bed through Hell's Half Acre via a lined channel and channelizing Owl Branch in the Blue Hole area. Lined channels will eliminate surface water recharge to the ground-water system.

—Wells penetrating the Roubidoux aquifer will be examined. Abandoned wells will be plugged, so water cannot flow into them and leach heavy metals into the aquifer.

—Re-contouring the surface and plant vegetation in areas of heavy mining to prevent water from picking up heavy metals as it runs over the mounds.

The cleanup plan that is being recommended by the EPA and KDHE is from among 12 that were developed for the Galena site. Each of the plans were examined and screened based on the general effectiveness, feasibility and estimated costs. Five of the 12 alternatives were selected for detailed evaluation.

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